

TALES OF TERROR--BY THE MODERN MASTERS OF FANTASY

# THE HAUNT OF HORROR

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02  
THE HAUNT  
OF  
HORROR  
NOV. No 4



A TALE OF EERIE  
EXORCISM  
FEATURING  
GABRIEL  
DEVIL-HUNTER

PLUS:  
TWO  
FEAR  
FEATURES OF  
SATANA  
THE DEVIL'S  
DAUGHTER



A Haunt Of Horror Double-Size Pin-Up Of...

GABRIEL

DEVIL  
HUNTER



STAN LEE presents

Vol. 1, No. 4  
November, 1974

# THE HAUNT OF HORROR



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THERE ARE DEGREES OF EVIL. WE MORTALS MAKE MUCH OF THEM. WE TELL "WHITE" LIES. WE CHEAT A "LITTLE" ON OUR DEBTS. WE WITHHOLD THE TRUTH AND CLAIM "SPECIAL" PRIVILEGE. YES, DEGREES OF EVIL MEAN MUCH...ON EARTH!





BUT WHAT OF THE NETHERWORLD?  
WHAT STANDARDS HOLD IN THAT  
DARK AND CLAMMY REGION?

ARE THE FOUR--THOSE WHO KEEP THE  
DAUGHTER OF SATAN FROM HER FATHER--  
MORE OR LESS EVIL THINKEES, AND THEY  
WILL CHOOSE AS THEIR VICTIM?



THE ANSWERS:  
SWIFTLY TOLD!

DEGREES DO NOT  
MATTER HERE.

SURVIVAL DOES.

FOR THIS IS A MATTER OF SURVIVAL  
EITHER FOR THE FOUR OR FOR THE  
CRIMSON-TRESSED GODDESS WE  
KNOW AS

**SATAN**

**THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER**

THAT QUESTION SHALL  
BE DETERMINED HERE...

**THIS SIDE OF HELL**



THIS WAS THE ALTERNATE PATH TO YOUR FATHER'S KINGDOM, SATANA. BUT THE FOUR... THE **THREE**... HAVE BEATEN US TO IT!

WE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED AS MUCH, ZANNARTH. BUT THOUGH THIS BARRIER BE **STEEPED** IN THEIR MAGICKS--

--I SHALL **PENETRATE** IT!



**SATAN!** THE MEREST CONTACT WITH THIS WALL SENDS EXCRUCIATING **PAIN** THROUGH MY BODY!

BUT I AM NO **STRANGER** TO PAIN-- BE IT **PHYSICAL** PAIN--



--OR PAIN OF THE **SOUL!**

**SATANA, NO!** HASN'T IT OCCURED TO YOU --



-- THAT WE'VE WALKED INTO A **TRAPP** WE'RE BOXED IN HERE! SO **SAVE** YOUR STRENGTH!

YOU'RE GOING TO **NEED** IT!



SO IT'S TO BE A **SHOWDOWN** THEN, MY **INCUBUS** ALLY? WE'VE FACED THE FOUR BEFORE--AND **LOST!**



"THEY DID MORE THAN **SEPARATE** ME FROM MY FATHER IN THAT HOUR. I FOUND MY **SUCCUBUS** POWER HAD BECOME A **CURSE**."

"NO LONGER WAS IT A **WEAPON**..."

THEY DROVE US FROM OUR **HOMELAND**-- YOU TO THE **NETHER** WORLD AND I TO **EARTH**. \*

\*VAMPIRE TALE'S #2 + 3 T.I

"IT WAS NOW  
MY ONLY MEANS  
OF SUSTENANCE



GIRLIE,  
THIS'S GONNA  
BE MORE FUN THAN  
THE OTHERS. I WON'T  
EVEN CARE IF YOU  
WANNA FIGHT  
ME A LITTLE.

WHY  
SHOULD  
I?

MMMMMM



AFTER  
ALL, YOU WERE  
KIND ENOUGH TO  
GIVE ME THIS SMALL  
AND WIGGLING  
THING YOU CALLED  
YOUR SOUL.



"I FELT NO REMORSE.  
ONLY HATRED FOR THE  
BEINGS WHO HAD PLACED  
THIS BURDEN ON ME."

"I SWORE  
TO FIND  
THEM."



SOMETHING DREW ME  
WEST. PERHAPS I SENSED  
THE FOUR'S PRESENCE  
THERE. PERHAPS THEIR  
TOWERS CALLED ME THERE.

BY THE  
POINTS OF GOOD,  
LET US PRAY. LET THE  
GODS RELIEVE THE  
EVIL IN OUR  
WORLD.

LET THEM TEAR  
ASUNDER THE UNNATURAL  
RELATIONS. SEPARATE  
FATHER FROM UNHOLY  
DAUGHTER.



"...OF THE MEETING  
AT WHICH THEY SPLIT  
APART MY FATHER  
AND I, SEEMINGLY  
FOREVER..."

THE FOUR'S  
MORTAL SLAVES  
WERE INDEED IN  
LOS ANGELES. I  
USED MY MEAGER  
RESOURCES TO  
CONJURE UP  
THE IMAGE...

SATAN FROM  
SATANA, DEMON  
FROM DEMONESS.  
HEAR OUR PRAYER,  
HEED OUR  
PRAYER.

HALVE THIS UNION.  
SEND DAUGHTER TO  
MOTHER. AND LET  
THERE BE GRIEF  
NO'ERMORE.

"THE FOUR WERE OUT OF MY REACH. THEIR FOLLOWERS WERE NOT. I CHOSE MY ASSASSIN WELL..."



"RICH CORBETT, FORMERLY AN ARMY LIEUTENANT IN VIETNAM, NOW READY TO MURDER AGAIN... THIS TIME IN THE NAME OF LOVE."

"I DID NOT KNOW THE FOUR HAD DEMANDED ADDITIONAL SACRIFICE FROM THEIR SLAVES."



"OH NO, NO! IT'S TOO GREAT A PRICE TO PAY, TOO HEAVY A DUTY TO DEMAND!"

"THAT'S ENOUGH. IF THE FOUR WANT THIS, THEN MILES GORNEY, AT LEAST, IS WILLING TO GIVE IT TO THEM."

"MILES GORNEY IS WILLING TO DIE."



"I DID NOT LEARN THIS UNTIL... TOO LATE."

**KRAK!**

"FAR TOO LATE."



"I KILLED CORBETT IN MY RAGE, THEN FOUND A WAY I COULD ENTER THE NETHERWORLD--WHERE I'VE BEEN HOUNDED EVER SINCE."



"BUT WE HAVE AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE FOUR. THEY ARE NOT UNITED AS WE ARE. REMEMBER WHAT WE FOUND ON THE WAY HERE?"

"THE BODY OF TRACHOS, ONE OF THE FOUR, THE DEMON'S ATTACK MUST HAVE BEEN HIS PLAN, AND WHEN IT FAILED..."



"THE OTHERS DESTROYED HIM!"\*

\* The Haunt of Horror #2, T.I.



# ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE!

RAGA IS MINE, SATANA! I'LL **PLUCK** THOSE BALEFUL EYES FROM THEIR SOCKETS AND FEED THEM TO HIM!

ZARNARTH FIGHTS ON TWO LEVELS AS HE DID IN HIS YOUNGER DAYS!

HE BRINGS FEAR INTO HIS FOES MIND WITH HIS WORDS AS HE DOES **GREATER** DAMAGE WITH HIS STRONG ARMS AND...

YOUR CONCERN FOR YOUR FELLOW DEMON **BETRAYS** YOU, DAUGHTER OF SATAN--



...AND DELIVERS YOU INTO MY CLAWS!



LIGH!



MMMMMMMMMM



NO! YOU'LL NOT HAVE MY SOUL, VIXEN!



OH, BUT I WILL, KARATH!

I MOST CERTAINLY WILL!







I STAND ALONE AGAINST THREE FOES. MY STRENGTH IS GREATER THAN ANY MORTAL'S, BUT IT IS NOT ENOUGH.

MY SUCCUBUS POWER IS USELESS HERE. I HAVE ONLY ONE RECOURSE--AND IT CAN GAIN ME BUT A MOMENT'S RESpite BY CONFUSING MY ENEMIES!

NOR CAN I CALL ON SATAN FOR AID. THEIR SPELL HAS BOUND ME TO MY HUMAN HERITAGE.

I WILL STRIP AWAY THE FALSE IMAGES THEY HAVE OF THEMSELVES. I WILL LAY BARE THEIR SOULS AND LET THEM SEE THEMSELVES AS THEY TRULY ARE.

THIS IS ABSURD! MY OPENING THEIR SOULS SHOULD ONLY HAVE DIS-TRACTED THEM FOR A MOMENT OR TWO.

AN INSTANT IS ALL IT TAKES ILLUSIONS BUILT UP FOR YEARS ARE QUIETLY SHATTERED.

THE THREE ARE FORCED TO LOOK INTO THEIR SOULS, FORCED TO SEE THE CANCERS THAT FESTER THERE.

AND THEY CAN'T LOOK AWAY!

THEY ACT AS IF I HAD SENT SATAN'S OWN FLAME COUR- SING THROUGH THEIR LINEARLY VEINS!

CAN IT BE? THEY ARE ACTUALLY SHEDDING THEIR SUPERNATURAL FORMS AND BECOMING--






TRACHOS?!  
BUT YOU'RE...

"DEPARTED?"  
NO, MY DEAR. NOR  
TRULY TRACHOS.




MILES  
GORNEY!

AT YOUR SERVICE,  
MY DEAR. AT YOUR  
SERVICE.



PLEASE DON'T TRY  
TO PIERCE MY PER-  
SONAL PROTECTIVE  
BARRIER. IT'S  
QUITE INDESTRUC-  
TIBLE, QUITE.

WHY THIS CHARADE,  
MILES GORNEY? IF  
THAT IS, IN FACT,  
YOUR NAME.



IT IS, AND YOU'RE  
RIGHT. THIS ALL WAS  
...IS... A CHARADE.  
THE FOUR. YOUR  
SEPARATION FROM  
YOUR FATHER. MY  
DEATHS, ALL OF  
IT! A CHARADE.

I HAD THOUGHT YOU  
WERE SLAVE -- TO THE FOUR  
SUPERNATURAL BEINGS  
WHO COVETED MY  
FATHER'S KINGDOM.  
BUT NOW...



NOW YOU FIND THAT **NOTHING** IS THE WAY YOU THOUGHT IT WAS, THOUGH I DO COVET YOUR PATER'S DOMAIN...AND FAR MORE.

I HAD HOPED YOU WOULDN'T DO THAT.



IT WOULD TIE THINGS UP RATHER **NEATLY** IF I ANSWERED YOUR QUESTIONS, WOULDN'T IT?



BUT WHERE DOES YOUR POWER COME FROM? WHAT DID YOU ACCOMPLISH BY ALL **THIS**-- THE DEATH OF ZANNARTH--THE DEATHS OF YOUR COMPANIONS?



SO VERY NEATLY.



BUT SATANA WILL PUT ALL EMOTION **ASIDE**, LEST IT INTERFERE WITH HER NEW SWORN TASK.



SATANA WILL SOON NOTE THAT THE BARRIER BLOCKING HER FROM HER FATHER HAS VANISHED WITH MILES GORNEY.

SHE WILL ALSO NOTE THAT ZANNARTH IS STILL DEAD AND THAT SHE HAS BEEN USED.



SHE WILL TURN FROM THE PATH TO HER HOME-LAND.

SHE HAD BEEN ACCUSED OF EMOTION THIS DAY, PERHAPS THIS WAS CORRECT.



AND IF THERE BE ANSWERS TO ALL THAT HAS OCCURRED HERE, THEY SHALL BE FOUND IN THE HOUR OF THAT VENGEANCE.

VENGEANCE

# While The Band Plays On...Subscribe!

Okay, culture-lover. While Drac leads Marvel's own sinister symphony orchestra in a selection of concertos for a Transylvanian evening, you can subscribe to THE HAUNT OF HORROR, CRAZY, TALES OF THE ZOMBIE,

and a horror host of other magazine masterpieces. All you have to do is fill out the convenient coupon we've provided below. Which, you must admit, is easier than scaling the Alps or doing push-ups over a live volcano.

"Hey, Marv, do you know Vampires in the Night?"

"No, Tony. But hum a few bars and I'll stake it."

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# THE HUNT OF HORROR

Editorial bally-hoo by Tony Isabella

Okay, so now you know what the Haunt's editor looks like.

No, not the one in the Satana costume. *She* looks good. I'm the smiling demon next to her. The occasion was the costume parade of the 1974 New York Comic Art Convention held over the July 4th weekend. The lady is a comics fan/actress whose name is Angelique Trouvere. One look at the fabulous job she had done designing her costume and ideas started flowing through my brain. No, not the lecherous thoughts that were painfully obvious on Marv Wolfman's face. You see, I've always had this fascination for the photo comic format the Italians call *fumetti*. So....

Next issue, you'll see the first Satana fumetti. A different kind of comics presentation. I think you'll like it.

You'll also see the premiere appearance of Chris Claremont and Tony De Zuniga as our sultry succubus' new writer-artist combination, plus a double-sized pin-up of the Devil's Daughter. It has taken a while for Satana to adapt to her new spot in THE HAUNT OF HORROR, but now she's here to stay.

Enough on next issue. We've got plenty to astound, entertain, and horrify you *this* issue.

Jump right in. The fear's fine.



## Bulletins from the Bullpen

**ITEM!** As you read these words, most of you have already bid fond farewells to your summer vacations. But as we write these words, the members of the Marvel editorial staff are just packing their bags for a few weeks' rest from their creative labors. If you add up their plans, the gang's going to be hitting just about every region of the U.S. A Editor-in-Chief ROY THOMAS (with Wife-in-Chief JEAN THOMAS) will be winging his way west to sunny California. MARV and MICHELE WOLFMAN (along with LEN and GLYNIS WEIN) will be leaving on a 2-week camping trip which will cover Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. (where the World Science-Fiction Convention will be held). TONY ISABELLA, after returning to his native Ohio for the wedding of an old pal (Congratulations to Mike and Angela Hudak) will head up to Michigan to visit a couple of newlyweds whose recent wedding he unfortunately missed (Likewise, Rob and Cathy Maisch) and, from there, to a convention down in Georgia before meeting the afore-mentioned Junior Woodchucks in D.C. Meanwhile, DON MCGREGOR has just returned from Hawaii and DAVE KRAFT just left (as we write this sentence) for North Dakota. Last we forget, IRENE VARTANOFF's been week-ending in Cape Cod. If we didn't hit your state this summer, don't feel bad. There's always next year!

**ITEM!** Not all of our bashful Bullpeners were exactly vacationing, though. As we mentioned in SAVAGE TALES #6, TONY DEZUNIGA was hit by a kidney ailment from which he has since happily recovered; but not before spending a few weeks in the hospital. DOUG MOENCH and BILLY GRAHAM (the creative team who began the Gabriel strip in THE HAUNT OF HORROR) both ended up in the hospital on the same day for minor ailments. We're not saying their illness was in any way related to the nature of the Gabriel series, but we're glad we don't have to produce the strip! Both are up and around and turning out Marvel masterpieces by the fistful, we're happy to report.

**ITEM!** Let's have a hearty Bullpen welcome for Bedazzlin' BARBARA ALTMAN, the latest addition to our dynamic design department. Barbara joins MARCIA GLOSTER and NORA MACLIN, much to the delight of Production Potentate LEN GROW, who shares an office with the three ladies. Good to have you aboard, Barbara...even if you won't tell us what you did *before* coming to Marvel.

**ITEM!** Everybody's talking about the startling changes Marvel-ous MARV WOLFMAN is making in DRACULA LIVES and VAMPIRE TALES. First, he's switching *Lilith* (the Daughter of Dracula) to her pop's mag. That way, there's room for another great series to join *Blade* and *Morbus* in VAMPIRE TALES. So look out for *Hannibal King*, *Vampire Detective* by LEN WEIN and FRANK THORNE. He's coming your way soon! (P.S.: And look for some double and triple-length stories in upcoming issues of DRACULA LIVES!)



**ITEM!** Just enough space left to bring you up to date on our newest magazine projects. IRON FIST (starring the costumed Kung Fu character who's taken our color comics by storm) has been delayed a month to insure its premiere issue being every page the blockbuster we want it to be. So look for it in October. WORLDS UNKNOWN is nearing completion. We're just waiting for a production date on this, Marvel's premiere science-fiction magazine. And the MARVEL PREVIEW book is set for October release with its lead entry, the brain-boggling MAN-GOOS FROM BEYOND SPACE. One last note: by popular demand, Ooc Savage lives again! But wait! You'll see the format he's coming back to the newsstands in! Wow!

**ITEM!** No more news this time, but here's a list of Marvel mags on sale this month!

**DRACULA LIVES #8:** Four great stories! Four great artists! Starring the most famous vampire in all literature! Perhaps the one single issue of a magazine you can't afford to miss!

**THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU #5:** Shang-Chi, Master of Kung Fu, is forced to choose between "Two Goals To Seek/One Path to Glory" as he once more battles the assassins of Fu Manchu. Plus: the Martial Arts mauler called Baroc, photos, features, and more!

**TALES OF THE ZOMBIE #8:** A Zombie stalks the suburbs! See Simon Garth, the Man Without a Soul, face "A Death Made of Ticky-Tacky". Plus: stories and articles from the realm of Voodoo and black magic!

**SAVAGE TALES #7:** Ka-Zar, Lord of the Hidden Jungle, stars in two all new adventures! Brak the Barbarian makes his pulsing-pounding premiere! Adventure's biggest bargain--and we did it all for you, tiger!

Ciao!





Ordinarily, we'd take this space to run off at the mouth about how wonderful you are, how wonderful we are, and how wonderful your reception was to **THE HAUNT OF HORROR #2**.

All those things are true, of course, but there's so much else to say, we'll forego our back-patting session and forge right ahead into the mail.

(Ye gods—we actually managed to restrain ourselves for once in our macabre, fear-fraught lives!!!)

Dear Marvel,

**HAUNT OF HORROR #2** sure is different from the first issue. I didn't believe that you could do it, but it was also as good as the first.

Marvel has always been one for creating continuing characters as opposed to anthologies or "host"-type mags, so I was waiting to see what sort of characters you'd bring in. First, **Satana**: Esteban Maroto will be missed, but the character really didn't suffer. (I, too, am a fan of Modesty Blaise.) I find Romero's art exciting and innovative. And the story, or rather stories, were excellent. You seem finally to have put Satan in a manageable context. If you can't have him fight God, at least have him in opposition to some other gods. Kudos.

As for **Gabriel**: if Father Merrin had been delineated in a similar way, **The Exorcist** would have been twice the book or movie that it was. Doug Moench is some writer, and Billy Graham's art was very good, but I think he could use an inker like Dick Giordano or Klaus Janson. There was lots of tension, both in art and story.

"Gran'ma Died Last Year" was one heart-ripping shocker of a story.

As for the rest of the mag, and its general format, I liked it. The opportunity to get inside the heads of the Marvel writers was not to be missed. I think you've come close to providing the best analysis/consideration of **The Exorcist** I've yet seen. It was an experiment, and I'm not sure that a lot of your readers will have the patience to read all the text in this issue, but it was stimulating stuff.

I think **HAUNT OF HORROR** should be a mag that delves into the questions of evil and horror, exploring the more uncomfortable aspects of this genre, rather than the more easily-accepted domain of the monsters.

Until **Satana** meets **Hot Stuff**,

Peter B. Gillis  
18 Bayberry Rd.  
Elmsford, N.Y.

Not much chance of that, Pete—but if you think your stomach can stand it, **The Magazine that Dares to be Dumb** will be shortly be presenting one of the most tasteful, most exquisitely outrageous parodies of all time on a similar theme. You won't want to miss **Marv Wolfman's** bid for another "Best Humor Writer" award when **CRAZY** sheepishly presents the unexpurgated origin of **KASPAR, THE DEAD BABY**. Watch for it. And when you see it coming—hide!

Re: "The Exorcist Tapes". Reader reaction split almost exactly fifty-fifty on whether the experiment was a success. One reader pointed out, perhaps

with some validity, that a discussion about *anything* among ten people is nearly impossible to follow in transcript form. At any rate, if we try it again, we'll not only play around a bit with the format, but also with the subject matter. As other readers mentioned, **The Exorcist** has been talked to death by the time our transcripts saw print, even though the actual discussion occurred mere weeks after the film's release. Maybe next time around, we can put together a more compact panel and bat about a topic more specifically related to comics. (How about it, people? Would that be more to your liking?)



Dear Marvel,

Your second issue of **THE HAUNT OF HORROR** was the best *bow* book of the month and quite possibly the best of all that Marvel has done. There are a few reasons why I go out on a limb to say this. One, there were no reprints, and all three new stories were 'way above par. Two, Gerry's prose feature was interesting and a fine balance with the **Satana** strip. Three, "The Exorcist Tapes" was a good insight into the workings of the minds of some of the Bullpen while relaxed and in cozy company.

Now, on to the finer points. **Gabriel**, though an obvious play at the current exorcism trend, was done in that inimi-

table Marvel manner. That is, taking a theme no matter how hackneyed or cliché, and adding a twist to make it fresh and enjoyable. Doug Moench's characterization of **Gabriel** was handled beautifully. His past has been partially revealed, but not wholly, so he is still a mystery in many ways. Doug has proved himself a first-rate scripter and an excellent plotter to boot. If this wasn't enough to insure the success of the story, **Billy Graham** turned in one of his best art assignments to date.

"Gran'ma Died Last Year" was another great story from Doug, this time in collaboration with **Gene Colan**. It packed a burst of emotion, and I was really moved by the boy's plight. The ending was unexpected and shocking, but made the story that much better.

Gerry Conway's **Satana** text story was a nice reprieve between illustrated stories and was superbly supported by **Pablo Marcos'** fine drawings. The artwork in the second installment was a definite highpoint. I enjoyed **Enrique Romero's** illustrations immensely. I even liked it more than **Maroto's**, which is saying a lot.

"The Exorcist Tapes" in many ways reminded me of the explanations given in new mags as to how they came about. It had that loose, informal quality to it. In this respect, I liked it, because we can see the Bullpeners arguing in terms of taste and preference. Many of the arguments were valid and true, but others were the typical ones you hear from friends when talking about any movie. As a film student myself (NYU), I enjoyed this feature, because it shows that some members of the Bullpen know what they are talking about when it comes to cinema evaluation. Overall, it was good, but to try it again might be boring, to me at least, because of the repetition of ideas that I hear when discussing films with my friends.

Lastly, the cover by **Earl Norem** was good, but...it seemed to lack something. Did **John Romita** lay it out? It sure looked it.

Anyway, as always, good luck and best wishes,

Dean Mullaney  
81 Delaware St.  
Staten Is., N.Y. 10304

The reason some of the participants in "The Exorcist Tapes" discussion sounded knowledgeable about film, Dean, is that many of our Bullpen folk are also deeply involved in film and other media. **Don McGregor** has been producing his own shoestring-budget flicks for years. So has **Gerry Conway**. So has **Steve Gerber**. And **Steve** has even written an article on film, and its relationship to comics, soon to be published in **Super-8 Filmmaker**, a new publication aimed at (who else?) anyone, professional or amateur, working in the super-8 film format. That issue should be on sale just about the time you read this. Watch for it. You can't miss it—**Spider-Man's** on the cover!





## READERS' FORUM

Each issue, we reserve this space for a particularly interesting or controversial letter...and this one qualifies. An afterthought on *The Exorcist*, provided by the president of *The Count Dracula Society of New England*:

Dear Marvel,

About *The Exorcist*

Personally, I chuckled a great deal during the film and came away viewing it as the greatest black comedy I have ever seen.

The main question that arose in "*The Exorcist Tapes*" is why so many people are going to see the film. I think the best answer I have heard came from a local priest. Interviewed on TV, a Father Nadolny said that, first, people will go to see it because of social pressure—because everyone else has seen it. Secondly, he said, they will go out of curiosity, to see what all the talk is about and whether their stomachs are as strong as the next guy's. Thirdly, he mentioned the type of individual who is sick and will actually enjoy such a film. (Methinks this priest knows me!)

But I have come to some very simple conclusions on *The Exorcist* as a film and as a book. The film, if accepted solely as a horror-shock vehicle, which I think it was, is probably the best of its kind. As pure cinema escapism, it is justified. As anything else, it is foolish to consider it. The film and the novel did not convey a moral, which makes it a tale without sense. Evil did not lose, and Good did not win. Whatever entity possessed the girl was only removed, not destroyed. And the only good accomplished was that Father Karras regained his failing faith by taking the entity into himself, in the finest Christian tradition, thus forfeiting his life to save Regan's.

The paramount thing that turns me off to *The Exorcist* is its basic concept: that a 12-year-old child is possessed by a demon. There is no rationale, no reason for this to happen. Why possess an average, run-of-the-mill human being, when such a demon could possess a head of state, a big businessman, a pope, or anyone in a high position where the possession could really do some damage, some long-range evil? Riddle me that one, pilgrims?

Gordon R. Guy

Box 423

Glatstonbury, Conn. 06033

Because the Devil is concerned with earthly affairs only insofar as they can aid him in gaining souls with which to populate Hell. The point of possession, as was stated in the novel, is to make the onlookers despair, lose faith.

Dear Marvel,

From the start, your b&w books have shown great potential, but on the whole they have yet to fulfill that promise.

In two issues, *HAUNT OF HORROR* has become my favorite in your b&w line, and I think the reasons I like it so much may point to the negative elements in your other b&w books.

In all, *HOH #1* was refreshingly devoid of your monster heroes (Dracula, Man-Thing, etc.), and that is part of your problem—an overabundance of such characters. But that is not all of it, as *HOH #2* featured two monster heroes, Satana and Gabriel, and it was still better than any of your other issues.

The reason lies in the fact that Satana and Gabriel were created for the black-and-white books. Satana and Gabriel could not successfully appear in a color book. And, equally important, they do not appear anywhere else.

The actual differences between your color stories and your b&w stories is not that extreme. It is generally just a matter of more graphic violence and some sexual suggestions, and this generally adds to the impact of the stories. But I don't think you have worked out just how to handle some of the more mature aspects that you wish to inject into your b&w line.

For example, there were complaints about the nudity in your earlier issues, and these were partially justified. But in your black-and-white books you deal mainly in the supernatural, and the supernatural does contain a strong erotic element which I don't think should be totally avoided. Case in point: the *Satana* text story in *HOH #2*, in which she evokes a spell in the nude, as she simply got out of bed and performed the rite in the dark apartment. There was no reason for her to put on any clothes, and many mystic rites are performed in the nude. Now, if the

story had been fully illustrated, would she have been depicted in the nude? After all, she is supposed to be a succubus. I know this is a tricky question, but I'm sure you can handle it and handle it right.

The two degrees of explicitness—one for color, one for b&w—is a small nuisance, but there remains the problem of overexposure. Dracula appears in two color books of different sizes, and in his b&w book he appears in all the

stories. Man-Thing also appears in two color books, as does Shang-Chi. Conan, Ka-Zar, Morbius, and the Frankenstein Monster all appear in their own 25c books, as well as the black-and-whites. That's a lot of stories to come up with for any one character, and you can't expect all of them to be good. Too, there is the possibility that readers will tire of seeing these characters all over the place.

What it all boils down to is this: have you really done anything different with your black-and-white books from what you've already done in the color mags? I don't think so. With the exception of the Zombie, all your continuing characters can and so appear in color. As yet, your b&w books have not explored any storylines that have not been done in your color mags. I'm not saying that is necessarily bad, but is it what you wanted to do? *HOH #2* comes close, I think, to what you wanted.

Paul Wishinsky  
119 Harbison Ave.  
Hartford, Conn. 06106

We've little space left, Paul, to go deeply into the thought-provoking questions you've raised. But, briefly...

On the matter of overexposing our characters: Morbius, the Frankenstein Monster, and Ka-Zar appear only bi-monthly in color, so we see their b&w appearances as being no more a threat than monthly publication of their respective 25c magazines. As for Conan and Shang-Chi, the demand for their adventures warrants publication in both formats. What more can we say?

As for Dracula, he won't be filling all the space in *DRACULA LIVES* much longer. He'll be starring in two of the three stories, and the third will feature his demonic daughter *Lilith*, who's moving to that mag from *VAMPIRE TALES*. Likewise, Man-Thing, when he appears in or b&w books, will show up only in text stories.

In short, we recognize the problem, and we're working to prevent it from becoming too serious. We don't feel we've oversaturated the market yet, and we don't intend ever to reach that point.

But the question you raised that intrigues us the most is the one concerning our aims with our b&w magazines. We feel that, especially in our *Lilith*, *Gabriel*, and *Satana* series, we have tackled storylines that would be out-of-bounds for the color books—but have we gone far enough?

Opinions, people? What sort of themes would you like to see us explore?

## READERS' POLL

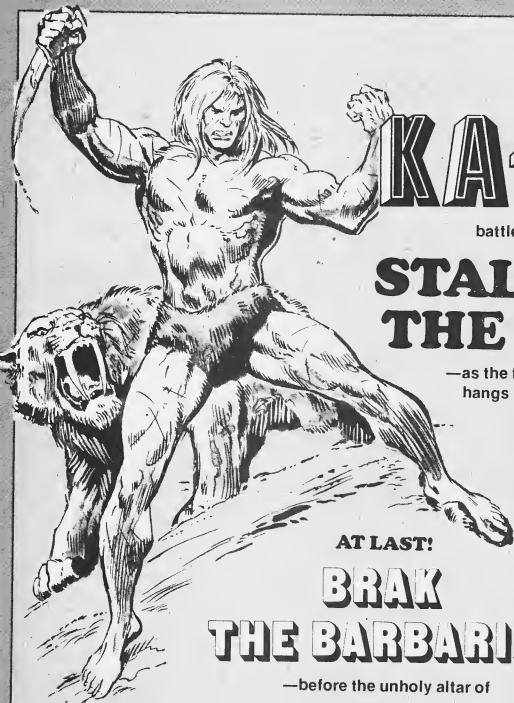
Here's how you rated the stories and features in *HAUNT OF HORROR #2*:

- (1) The winner, by a slanted eyebrow, was "Bloody Is The Path To Hell", the Satana offering, written by Gerry Conway and illustrated by Enrique Romero...
- (2) ...with the introduction of Gabriel, Devil-Hunter, as pulsatingly portrayed by writer Doug Moench and artist Billy Graham coming in a very close second.
- (3) "Gran'ma Died Last Year", another Doug Moench tale, was hailed as one of the best ever of our non-series stories, both for its chilling concept and the exquisite art of Gene Colan and Frank Chiaromonte.
- (4) "A Fire In Hell", the Satana prose tale, by Gerry Conway, with illustrations by Pablo Marcos, placed fourth, followed closely by...
- (5) "The Exorcist Tapes", one agonizing evening in the lives of ten Marvel writers; their wives, and a cassette recorder.

Now—how do you think we did this time around? Send all letters, votes for this poll, and homogenized demon-droppings to:

THE HAUNT OF HORROR  
Marvel Magazine Group  
575 Madison Avenue  
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battles the many-fanged

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hangs heavy in the balance!

AT LAST!

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—before the unholy altar of

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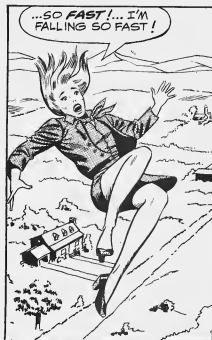
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THE EARTH... FEEL THE  
WIND CURLING  
AROUND YOU AND  
ROARING IN YOUR  
EARS. IMAGINE A...

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FLIGHT 17!!

YIPPEE! TED'S FLIGHT! I'LL GO WATCH FROM THE OBSERVATION DECK!



MY DARLING... SOON WE'LL BE TOGETHER... FOREVER!

MARY JANE WATCHES HAPPILY AS TED'S PLANE DRAWS CLOSER...



AND CLOSER...



...AND CLOSER...



THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER WITH SIGHTLESS EYES. FOR MARY JANE, THE NIGHTMARES ARE OVER...

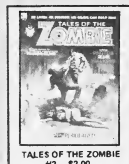




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# DOORWAY TO DARK DESTINY

A  text story  
by Chris Claremont

Art by Pat Broderick  
& the Crusty Bunkers

She lay face down in the alley, in the garbage, her body hunched in on itself against the pain. There'd been a lot of pain these past hours; she'd never believed there could be such pain. She felt all squashed inside, her breath coming in hoarse, frothy gasps, her blood obscenely bright as it mixed with the mud congealing around her. She'd tried moving once, a long time ago, and the attempt had left her breathless with the sudden, blinding agony. She hadn't tried again.

She was going to die; she knew that now. And not all her Hell-spawned powers could save her.

She didn't want to die.

"Father," she keened, knowing her call was hopeless; she was too weak to pierce the mystic barrier Miles Gorney had erected between Hell and Earth. The barrier. She'd thought it destroyed in the Cave of the Winds, when the Four had attacked her and Zannarth, and



Zannarth had died; but tonight, when she'd blasted a desperate mindcall for Satanic aid across the ether, she'd found the barrier up again. Stronger than ever.

Restored and unhurt, she might have pierced it; but not now. She had no strength left. Still, she had to try.

"Father!" she called. "Help me. In Hell's name, help me..." The effort was too much, her system too far gone to stand the strain; she blacked out.

That was how he found her.

He'd been working the four-to-midnight shift out of the Rogovin Pavilion's emergency rooms and, as so often happened around the Labor Day weekend—fuel crisis or no fuel crisis—a multiple car chain reaction smashup on one of the outer belt freeways had kept everyone working their butts off well into the small hours of the morning. It had been near three before

he'd gotten out. Jimmy Cruz had been there, too, tall and looming in his black suit. A lot of the deaders had been Catholic and Jimmy—Monsignor Cruz now, it seemed; Jimmy-boy had done well for himself—had been called in to administer last rites.

There'd hadn't been time to be delicate with most of the patients; it was a lot like Nam. The bodies had been rushed into surgery direct from the ambulance bay or medivac helipad; once in surgery, Heron and the other duty surgeons had scanned, rough-cut—basic, stop-gap work only unless the patient was really wiped out—and moved the live ones on out to Intensive Care. They'd played butcher shop; but, because they were damn good at their job, they hadn't lost too many.

Once or twice during the madness, Heron had come up for air, his eyes meeting Jimmy's, both men nodding hello before returning to work. He'd spotted Jimmy looking for him when he was in the scrub room, and he'd gotten out fast.

He didn't want to talk to Cruz; he knew what the other man would say, he'd heard it all before and he didn't want to hear it again.

He stood a moment on the street, listening to the growling hubbub coming from the reporters massed around the hospital's main entrance; it was a hot night, sticky with the threat of an approaching storm. Normally—trucking home this early in the morning—he'd have called for a taxi, but tonight he didn't feel like it. After ten hours in the cramped insanity of the emergency room, he wanted to stretch his legs and be alone, muggers or no muggers.

So he walked. It was only a couple of miles to his apartment; a half-hour's distance if he set himself a good pace.

The cat stopped him. A big cat, the biggest alley-roamer he'd ever seen, stretching out in front of him on the sidewalk. Heron stepped towards the street, intending to go around—wondering if strays were really as peaceable as they were reputed to be—but the cat blocked his way again. He stepped forward, hoping the animal would give way; instead, its ears went flat along its skull and it bared its teeth. Big teeth, too.

He was too tired to argue, so he turned around and headed back towards the intersection—figuring he'd cut over a block and come up to his apartment house from the other direction. Except the cat wouldn't let him go that way, either.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" he asked the cat, feeling annoyed, and a little foolish. *I'm flipping out*, he thought, *I really am. I'm talking to a cat!*

Then he heard the groan.

He was in the alley before his Inner-City-Common-Sense could stop him, the cat bounding in after him. It only took him a moment to check the woman over and his face twisted with a mixture of anger and helplessness when he saw what had been done to her. Someone had worked her over, but good; worked her over to kill. He'd need a paramed team for this, and an ambulance to get her over to the Rogovin Pavilion. Even then, she'd probably be DOA.

There was a police callbox just up the street.

He started out of the alley but, again, the cat blocked his way. It was on its feet now, a low growl coming



from behind its red eyes; no way was it going to let him pass.

He'd never seen a cat with red eyes before; but, red eyes or not, he'd had just about enough of this animal.

"You with her?" he asked; he didn't wait for any kind of answer. "Look, cat, I'm a doctor and I can help her, but not here. She needs expert help and the best facilities and even then it's gonna be touch-and-go, so lemme by and lemme call an ambulance before it's too late! A'right?"

He took a step forward and the cat spat at him, its fur gone stiff all down its back. Heron took a slow breath and stayed where he was.

"Father!" the woman murmured, semi-conscious and delirious; Heron turned back to her and tried to make her as comfortable as he could. That damn cat!

"Father, help meeee..." her voice trailed off, her head flopping limply to one side; instinctively, Heron felt for her pulse, found it. What there was of it—thready and very weak; she didn't have much time.

She'd called him 'Father'; how did she know?

He shook his head as he stripped off his coat, wadding it into a pillow for her head. It was impossible; there was no way she could have known... He shrugged his shoulders, maybe the woman was Catholic and hallucinating. *Jimmy Cruz*, he thought, *where are you when I need you?*

"Easy, luv, easy." Heron said softly, stroking the woman's head. There wasn't much light in the alley but there was enough to see that, once, this beaten hulk had been a very beautiful woman. God, what a waste. "Just relax, it'll be over soon..."

She stirred, her eyes fluttered open; they cast about wildly for a moment before they met his. The woman relaxed then, the hint of a smile playing around the edges of her mouth. All of a sudden, her gaze dropped to his chest and she cried out, pushing at him with the little strength she had left, twisting her head as far away from

him as she could. She was crying now, whimpering; in agony, but an agony that had nothing to do with the physical hurts she'd suffered.

Heron looked down at his chest. Somehow, in his rush to leave the hospital, he'd gotten his crucifix chain tangled up so that it was hanging outside his shirt instead of underneath. In the alley's shadows, with his cross hanging outside his dark shirt, you *could* almost mistake him for a priest.

But why should she fear a priest so?

"You move real slow, bo'; an' mebbe you don't get hurt none. You got that, bo'?"

Cursing himself with every name in the book for letting his guard drop, Heron eased the woman's head down and pushed himself to his feet.

"You turn 'round, bo'," the voice said, 'an' you keep it real slow."

He turned, and a blinding light snapped full into his face. Heron crying out as pain seared across his eyes, covering his face with his arms to blot out the unbearable light. As he reeled, he felt hands slapping him all over, checking for weapons.

"What is this?" he snapped.

"I'll ask the questions, bo'. Now, who're you?"

"I'm a doctor and this woman..."

"I know about that woman." The man made the word an obscenity. "B'lieve me, doc, I know. How come she ain't dead yet?"

"You did that to her?"

"Me an' some friends. I as't your name."

"Heron. Michael Heron. What's this all about?"

"Less you know, doc, the less you c'n tell; all you got t'do is be a good boy, an' not involved and everythin's gonna be jus' fine. Copy, doc?"

"She'll die, dammit!" Heron flared. The other man just chuckled softly.

"Tha's the idea, bo'," he said.

Heron squinted into the light, trying to see the man behind it; no good, the beam was too strong. And yet, there was something terribly familiar about his speech patterns, his movements.

"You Beret?" Heron asked suddenly.

"Ain't none o' your business, bo'," the other man snapped, then he laughed. "Yeah, doc, I'm a Green Beret. Ex. Can't tell you no more, elsewise I'll have to smoke you, too. 'S'funny, tho', bein' a Beret's what brought me back. 'T'others, they figured the beatin' alone'd do the trick. But not me; t'me, the enemy ain't dead 'til you got their heads hung on you' hooch poles. Sometimes, not even then. So I came back t'make sure. Good thing I did, too; wouldn't you say?"

The man laughed again.

And something squalled from the street end of the alley, something that might have been cat, might have been lion; something both men knew was not born of this earth, or any other. The man turned, tossing his light to one side as he threw himself against the far wall of the alley and brought his rifle up. It was an M-16, set on automatic, and he triggered an entire clip up the alley as the thing that had squalled its challenge hurtled down to meet him.

The man was fumbling a fresh clip into his rifle when the thing slammed into him, and he screamed as its fetid, charnel-pit breath started his face running like melting

wax, screamed impossibly louder as its great claws raked him open from chin to groin.

Heron almost screamed himself when the madly rolling flashlight caught what was left of the man—and the thing that had killed him—in its beam for a second. The thing was *feeding!*

The thing turned to him, its red eyes gleaming deep into Heron's gray ones and, numb with horror at what had happened—what was happening!—Heron felt himself turn back to the barely-alive body of the woman, felt himself scoop her battered form out of the garbage, felt himself stagger-run up the alley with her in his arms.

The cat followed him, its red eyes never leaving Heron as it herded him back to his apartment. There was a scuffle at the elevator—Heron wasn't sure why—part of him wondering what had happened to the Night Porter, most of him concentrating on getting the woman into bed before she died.

He cleaned her up as best he could, splinting her broken limbs and bandaging her cuts with the few supplies he dared keep around the house; but the work was makeshift, brilliant improvisation at best. The way she'd been slammed around, the woman must have suffered some internal injuries; but there was no way of knowing outside a hospital. He'd given up trying to call one; each time he moved towards the phone, the cat would block his way, ears down, fur up, teeth bared. It was almost funny until he remembered the man in the alley; the thing bending over him.

And then there was the woman's birthmark.

He'd found it when he'd examined her, its delicate black outline nestled at the base of her throat—hidden by the high collar of her tunic—standing out in stark contrast to her ivory skin. He'd recognized it the moment he saw it but he'd gone into his study to check, just to make sure.

Satanmark.

And not just any Satanmark, if his books were to be believed. This ornate a brand meant one of the Royal House, blood kin to Lucifer himself. And if blood kin meant daughter . . .

Succubus.



If the books were to be believed.

He shivered, in spite of himself, wondering idly if his faith was strong enough to protect him. If it wasn't, he'd know soon enough. *Que sera, sera*, he thought; *what will be, will be* . . .

Besides, that cat wasn't going to let him go anywhere.

Or was it? The animal had followed Heron into the study but it had stayed near the far wall ever since. He looked at the cat a moment and then moved his eyes across the room to the chipped wooden crucifix mounted over his hearth. It had been a sort of going away present from some grunts he'd worked with in Nam, a tribute to the fact that he'd survived a year in the boonies. That he'd survived at all. If there was anything in his life Heron cherished, it was that cross. And the cat was afraid of it.

And why not? If the cat was indeed the woman's Satanic familiar, then it was only logical that it should fear the cross.

"Cat," Heron said quietly, "I think you're bluffing."

The cat ignored him, its attention focused on washing its left forefoot.

Heron smiled, wondering why this insanity seemed so natural; maybe that was what insanity was. A different view of what was natural. And somehow—God knew why—he'd tumbled over the edge, into a nightmare.

Well, nightmare or no, the woman needed a hospital. Heron reached for the phone, praying to God he wasn't too late.

The cat did nothing.

Heron started, the phone banging down onto its cradle, his back icy with fear as he pulled himself to his feet, listening. He'd heard *something*—a something that had touched deep, primeval fears—but what? He listened for the sound again, every sense honed to a feverish alertness; but all he could hear were the usual house sounds, a car or two on the street outside, the wind, a late flight drifting into Los Angeles International.

He shook his head, wiping a hand across his forehead, and he wasn't at all surprised to find himself soaking in sweat. At this rate, insanity or no, he'd never last the night.

What the hell was that Jim Morrison line, "You may petition the Lord with prayer, petition the Lord with prayer . . ."

He looked over at the small hearth, the pictures and diplomas he'd grouped above it. His medical degree. His Seminary degrees: St. Jerome's in San Francisco, then work in Spain and at the North American College in Rome. His certificate of ordination and a photostat of his first assignment, his first parish. And, last but not least, dominating his collection, a letter, inscribed in Latin on ornate vellum. From His Holiness, the Pope, to Father Michael Heron, SJ, releasing the said Father Heron from all his priestly vows and responsibilities. Severing him from the priesthood now and for all time.

Six years he'd been 'out' now, and it still hurt.

The cat *mirrowed*, its eyes intent on Heron; and he had the feeling that it wasn't the cat watching him at all, but something/someone else. Examining him like he was a microbe on a slide; dissecting him and looking very pleased with what it found.

The cat went away and Heron turned back to the

crucifix above the hearth.

The words came unbidden; he'd heard and repeated them so often they'd become a part of him. And the weird thing was that, after all these years, they still gave him comfort.

"Our Father," he said softly, "who art in Heaven, blessed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven . . ."

From outside the study door, the cat stiffened as it heard Heron's voice; then it spat, its fur standing high along its back. It began to pace. But it never once looked inside the study.

Heron felt better when he was done.

He also felt hungry. Confused, he looked at his watch, massaging the back of his neck to ease the kinks that had grown there since yesterday morning. He vaguely remembered grabbing a quick snack around



eleven but that was it. And his watch said six-ten. Rush hour outside; already, he could hear the horns. It'd be dawn soon.

"Well," he groaned to no one in particular, "might as well have some breakfast; no point in going to bed."

Heron put some water on for coffee and cracked some eggs into one frying pan, spread bacon in another.

"Good . . . morning," the woman said from behind him.

He turned carelessly, his right hand brushing against one of the hot frying pans and getting burned; he cursed.

"What the blazes are you doing up?" he snapped, looking her over in a mixture of shock and confusion. She was whole and relatively undamaged, only a few bandages indicating that she'd been hurt at all, let alone near death. Her splints were gone, her broken bones obviously healed. She still looked very thin, though—almost lost inside one of Heron's terrycloth robes—her breathing shallow, her eyes bright with the residue of last night's fever.

"I heard you moving about," she said softly; she had a deep voice, a commanding one, made huskier and, oddly, more evocative by her fever. It was a voice to stir the blood. "I felt much recovered and I wished to thank you for your assistance."

Heron smiled wryly. "What assistance? You seem to have done it all yourself."

"The man would have killed me."

Heron's smile faded as he remembered last night, his eyes hardening as he found gaps in his memory that shouldn't have been there.

"What about that man . . ."

The woman smiled, looking past him. "Your eggs are burning."

"Damn!"

Heron flipped the eggs and ran a quick eye over the bacon, turning the rashers that seemed too crisp. "The eggs are almost done," he said, "you want some coffee in the meantime?"

"No, thank you. I require . . . different sustenance."

*Here it comes, he thought. And he sighed. Either the Satanmark means nothing or she really is the Devil's daughter. Which means she's a succubus. All of a sudden, he felt very tired.*

"Turn and face me, Michael Heron," she commanded; he turned the bacon. Her voice became sultry, hinting at all the dreams Man has had of Women since the first couple walked the Earth; it was pure heroin dangled in front of a mainliner's nose. He looked up and saw her reflected in the pans hanging over his stove, and her body was an enticing as her voice. To some, she was the ultimate woman. She was irresistible.

"Come to me, Man. I want you to come to me . . . to kiss me. Satana Calls you, Man. . . . Will you not answer her Call?"

"No."

He flipped a pair of eggs and some rashers of bacon onto a warm plate and faced her, holding the plate between them. Her eyes were green, he noticed; no iris, no pupil, just pure, shimmering, opalescent fire. Even as he watched, Satana's eyes became human again. A dark—almost black—jade, unfathomable.

"Have some breakfast," he said, "it'll do you some good. Doctor's orders."

Numbly, she took the plate and slid into a chair across the table from him; the cat narrowed at her, Satana glancing a reply.

"Exiter says that you were once a . . . priest," she said haltingly.

He pouted himself some coffee and dusted salt and pepper across his eyes. "Exiter? Oh, your cat." Then, he nodded, "Yeah, I was a priest. Once."

"Yet you resisted my Call. That has never happened before."

He smiled. "First time for everything. My soul—such



as it is—is already pledged. Has been for some time now."

"Many a man has cried those words before my Call claimed him. And his puny soul. You are different, Heron. You left your priesthood, why?" she asked suddenly.

"My business." *Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned*, the boy had said, *I didn't mean to waste that dink woman an' her kids. Honest. Father, forgive me. Please.*

No. Not then, not now.

"You look strange, Heron," Satana said, shattering his reverie.

"You don't look so hot yourself. What happened last night, Satana? Who were those men? Why were they trying to kill you?"

"Why do you think? I am Satan's daughter, and those fools fear me for the Antichrist; they fear my Father and they fear Armageddon and, so, they seek to put an end to that fear with my death. *Fools*, as if that would change anything."

"Are you the Antichrist?" he asked.

Now it was her turn to smile; she looked like some great cat, human in basic form, but pure, quintessential feline in everything else. She was playing with him like he was catnip and she was enjoying every moment. "You were a priest, Heron," she said silkily, letting his question pass, "yet you tried to help me. You try to help even now. Why?"

"Because . . . I was a priest."

"I don't understand."

Heron let out a wry laugh. "Neither do I." He stretched. "I'm going out for a paper," he announced. "Stay inside 'til I get back and keep the door locked. I shouldn't be too long."

Satana bowed her head in mock subservience, never

once taking her eyes off him; her voice stopped him at the door. "Heron," she called, "your soul would be a great prize; you know that."

He looked at her for a long moment. "I know," he said simply.

The hall was dark—half the lights turned off because of the Energy Crisis—but it was a straight line from Heron's door to the elevator; he'd have no trouble. He was halfway there when his foot hit something soft in mid-stride. His thoughts were on Satana and so, he fell; he hit hard.

There was a salty taste in his mouth. Blood. He grimaced; Satana'd probably like that. But what the hell had he fallen over?

A lit match answered that question. It was the Night Porter. And he was very dead. His body was shriveled, like some great prune left weeks in the Sahara sun, his face stamped deep with a look of indescribable horror—the boy had seen Hell before he died—that's right, he was a *boy*! No more than twenty, using this job to work his way through school. Yet this corpse looked as old as time.

But the worst thing was the boy's eyes. Great, staring, milky, empty orbs of nothingness staring madly into space. His *soul* was gone.

"Oh my God," Heron croaked, tears twisting their way down his face as he gently touched the boy's non-eyes. Then he remembered. The scuffle in the elevator, an Exiter-that-was-not-Exiter hypnotizing the boy, forcing him to help get Satana into Heron's bed and then stand by that bed until such time as Satana needed him for sustenance; the cat using the last of his power to blank all memory of the incident from Heron's mind, lest he interfere.

Satana was in the hallway, looking down at Heron and the boy. She looked . . . amused.





"Why?" he asked.

"He wanted me," Satana replied. The Truth of Truths. "And I wanted him."

"Why didn't you take me if you needed someone? Why the boy, for God's sake?" Heron was glad to see Satana reel slightly at this invocation. Good, he'd hurt her.

Exitir answered.

*Because you were too strong, Heron. And the battle would have killed her.*

Heron heard a whirr from behind; the elevator. It stopped, the doors banging open.

"YOU!" Satana roared, all the raw power and majesty she had to command rolling into that one word. Even in Heron's robe, she looked every inch a queen; and even Heron had to admit she was incredibly beautiful.

He turned to see what was happening.

Jimmy Cruz was crowding the hall with a half-dozen very tough looking combat troopers, all armed to the teeth and all wearing crosses. Jimmy Cruz was pointing an M-16 at Satana.

Heron didn't believe it; Jimmy was a priest!

"Die, Hellspawn!" Cruz roared, his voice almost as big as Satana's.

Heron had an instant to choose, a moment to act; he did both in the same move.

"Satana, inside!" he yelled as he dove up into Cruz, ramming the gun into the air as a burst of shells plowed holes in the ceiling. It was a hopeless fight, but all he wanted to do was buy time for Satana to get inside and call for help. "Call the Police! D'you hear me? Call the . . ." A rifle butt clubbed him into silence.

Cruz was still very much in command.

"All right, everybody out. And take this rene-

gade—" he pointed to Heron's unconscious form, "—with you. We'll deal with him later."

"What about the Hellspawn?" one of his men asked.

Cruz shook his head. "It's too late. The police are probably on their way. We have to leave now. But we'll be back. And the Hellspawn'll die!"

The hallway was empty in seconds.

Behind Heron's locked door, Satana shook her head slowly. "No, human, Satana will not die."

*The Man is nothing to us, Exitir said.*

"Nothing? A soul like Heron's dancing around my Father's throne would be a victory worth exile on this dust-mote. And those others must be made to pay for last night. I will not be beaten again, Exitir."

*Words, Mistress, mere words. They almost destroyed you last eventide.*

"All the more reason to strike quickly."

*And the Man, Mistress?*

"The Man is mine."

*I thought he was your Father's.*

Satana's voice was deadly still when she replied, her eyes gleaming with a basilisk glare. "Small One, you would do well to remember your place. And hold your tongue; lest I take it from you."

Yes, Mistress, Exitir said, his head still high. He yawned brazenly, without a care in the world.

But what of the Man, Heron? She had to claim his soul; that was the way of things. But she also knew that the day she took his soul, a piece of her would die, and she would feel . . . loss.

*Damn the human side of her! Damn and double-damn!*

She was Satana, the Devil's Daughter! And she would play her part to the end, come what may!

Exitir watched his mistress' posturing, and he laughed. He knew better, of course; he always did.

## part 2—

He'd lost her.

He froze in the shadows, turning slowly, every sense wide open as he searched the darkness around him. Nothing.

How the hell had she spotted him, anyway? He hadn't made any mistakes—that, he knew!—he was too old a hand at this game; starting with S&D ambushes in Nam and following his Army service up with a few years working out of the Agency's Domestic Operations Division, keeping tabs on radicals. And wasting a few of the more annoying ones.

Accidents, of course; murder wasn't Agency policy. He was very good at 'accidents.'

He spent ten minutes checking out the streets leading off the intersection, moving fast and silently through the night, his jacket open, his right hand never far from his gun. She was a dangerous bitch, this Satana Hellstrom; the way she'd butchered Arni last night had more'n proved that.

Still nothing.

The streets were empty, almost too empty—if this were Nam instead of LA, he'd be expecting a Charley ambush any minute now; as it was, all the local freaks were making him damn nervous—and the few people he did see didn't look at him as they passed. They read his type easily enough; he was 'street muscle' and they

wanted nothing to do with him. If there was gonna be trouble tonight, let the blue-boys handle it; that's what they were paid for.

The man took a last look round, then headed back to the intersection where he'd lost Satana. He didn't like it, didn't like it at all . . .

His hand was shaking as he fumbled inside his pants pocket for a dime, his loose change making a sharp, too-loud noise as it spattered all over the sidewalk. The man cursed, scrambling to find a dime in the milky street light, his eyes darting over the nearby streets with a desperate urgency. *Calm down he told himself; procedure, that was the way. When you've fouled up, especially when you're scared, always follow procedure.* That was how he'd stayed alive all these years.

He'd call base and let 'em know he'd lost the woman. Jimmy Cruz'd know how to take it from there.

He lit a cigarette before dialing his call; the smoke felt indecently good inside him.

Jimmy Cruz answered on the first ring.

"I lost her, Major," the man said quickly, trying to cover his fear with speed.

There was a moment's pause. "Where are you, Cam?"

"The 1700 block on Varick, just outside the Cahuenga Bank. It's a small shopping center just up from . . ."

"I know where it is. Did she 'make' you?"

"Nossir."

"All right. Stay there; I'm sending Hannigan's fire team out to support you. I want a full scale sweep all through that area, street by street. There are some Satanist churches in the area; you might do well to start with them. I want her found, Cam, and I want her killed. Tonight."

"Yessir."

"And no slip-ups this time. She's close, too close. It could be an accident, and it could be design; either way, we can't afford to take the chance. Not with her. Do you understand?"

"I copy, Major. There won't be any trouble; we found her before, we can find her again."

Um. Check back with me when Hannigan gets there."

"Yessir." The phone went dead in the man's hand as Cruz hung up.

Then Cam heard a woman's voice behind him, soft and oddly gentle.

"Look no further, mortal. I am here."

He started to turn, his hand clawing for his gun, but he was too late as one of Satana's hands hooked into the back of his neck, smashing his face hard into the tool steel body of the telephone before yanking him back off his feet. His head cracked against the bank's tile steps and he went blind with pain, his arms flailing uselessly in front of him as he tried to fight her off.

She grabbed his coat, picking him up as easily as he would a child, and threw him under the shadowed overhang of the bank's main entrance. He felt something soft and alive near him and he lashed out in a pitiful kick, smiling inside when he heard a high, anguished yelp, the sound of feet scrambling on the flagstone. Then, his vision cleared fractionally and his smile died; it hadn't been Satana at all, only some poor lady wino trying to stay alive by flopping on the relatively dry steps.

Cam turned—she had to be behind him—his gun, hand

moving under his coat with a speed that had never failed him before. And Satana slapped the gun into the street as if he'd been going for it in slow motion. Cam backed flat against the bank's prefabricated brick American Heritage facade, his mind numbed by the knowledge that his luck had just run out.

There was only one chance—not for him, he was a dead man; but for the Cause—if he could stall her, keep her there long enough, she'd be caught by Hannigan's fire team. He didn't mind dying that much; he'd been a grunt most of his life, it seemed, and dying was a part of a grunt's life. They were always expendable.

At least *his* death would have meaning.

She didn't move in right away; she just stood facing him, about five feet distant, her head canted down a little so she was watching him from underneath her brow. She was smiling, too, a cat with her catnip. And she was close enough to kick . . .

He tried, and even as he moved, Cam knew it had been a set-up; she'd been waiting for the move, expecting it. And when it came, she scooped up his leg in both hands, twisted, pushed, and rammed his face into the unyielding brick. He felt some teeth go, his nose smashed flat—he had to breathe through his mouth—the blood running free onto his clothes.

She was still looking at him, still smiling, daring him to try again. All he could do now was try to hold her here.

"Where is he, mortal?" she asked, her voice thrumming inside his head, setting him on fire. God, she was so *beautiful*.

"Wh—who?" he coughed, reaching into his mouth to pull a tooth free; it came loose without any pain. He threw it away.

"Heron, mortal. Michael Heron. The physician you abducted this morning. Where is he?"

"Don't . . . don't know what you're . . ." Satana let him get that far before she closed a hand around his neck, lifting him off his feet; Cam tried to struggle but he was too weak. His body wouldn't obey him anymore.

"Not good enough, human," Satana said quietly. Her eyes were different. They were glowing now, cast-



ing an impossible light of their own, shifting the planes and hollows of Satana's face until she no longer looked like a woman. She didn't even look *human*.

Cam heard a sound and his mind twisted inside itself as he recognized it as himself, whimpering.

The light was much brighter, the emerald soulfire in her eyes washing around and through him, enveloping him, destroying him. He was hers.

She let him down and he stood mute, waiting for her command.

"Where is he?" she asked simply, her voice pure ecstasy as it caressed his nerve ends.

And Cam, because he wanted her so badly, because he would do anything for her, told her. Satana smiled a last time, and stroked his face, pulling him over to her.

"This is your reward, dear Cameron. Take it!" She kissed him.

mmmmmmMMMM

He fought, trying frantically to get away, to save himself this last time, but her lips held him fast.

NNNNNNNNnnnnnn

His lifeless, horror-scarred body collapsed to the ground, draped head-first down the steps, its soul fluttering insanely, one wing held fast between Satana's teeth; as if it knew the fate in store for it. She tossed her head back, her leonine mane of fiery red hair swirling around her as she let Cameron's Damned soul fly free a moment, before a casual snap of her fingers blasted it down to Hell. Another minor soul sacrificed on her Father's altar.

"Wha'cha do to him?" a voice keened from behind her.

Satana looked 'round; it was only an old black woman, the woman Cameron had kicked thinking it was her. The woman was up by his body, her eyes wide with horror and fear, afraid that Satana would do the same to her.

She should. Kill her, anyway. Otherwise the woman might tell Cruz' men where Satana had gone. And that would never do.

She couldn't take the woman's soul; her succubus' kiss had no power over females, but killing the woman would be no problem. A twist of the wrist would snap the old crone's neck like a dry twig.

Satana took a step towards the woman, her right hand reaching for her, and the woman cringed away from her, huddling behind Cameron's body.

"Don' kill me, lady," the woman cried. "Please. I ain' done nothin' to you; I won' tell the police what you done. Please don' kill me. Please."

Satana touched the woman's neck, the wrinkled skin slimy under her fingers; she could smell the crone now, a stinking mixture of City filth and cheap liquor. Killing her would be a blessing; who knows, she might even go to Heaven . . .

Her hand tightened, choking off the woman's hoarse cry.

And then, Satana remembered . . .

*She lay face down in the alley, in the garbage, her body hunched in on itself against the pain. There'd been a lot of pain these past hours; she'd never believed there could be such pain. She felt all squashed inside, her breath coming in hoarse, frothy gasps, her blood obscenely bright as it mixed with*



*the mud congealing around her. She'd tried moving once, a long time ago, and the attempt had left her breathless with the sudden blinding agony. She hadn't tried again.*

*She was going to die; she knew that now. And not all her Hell-spawned powers could save her.*

*She didn't want to die . . .*

The old woman didn't want to die, either, no matter how wretched her life was.

Satana let her go.

"Exiter," she called. Her familiar answered almost immediately.

*I hear, mistress.*

"Did you hear . . ."

*Aye, mistress. I am there now. In fact, I am inside . . .*

She cut him off in mid-thought. "Be careful, Small One! Cruz is a dangerous man."

*You know that far better than I, Satana, Exiter laughed softly.*

Satana couldn't help smiling; the Small One would never learn. He was saucy and irreverent the day her Father had presented him to her; the years hadn't mellowed him any.

*There don't seem to be too many humans about, he was saying. And the ones that are here seem frightened. Of you . . .*

"What is it?"

*Cruz. I've found him. And I think he has found me.*

"Exiter, get out!"

*Too late. Heron is alive, mistress; bound but alive. Hellspit, Cruz is conjuring Dark Ones.*

*Mistress, the N'garai! They come for me! Mistress!*

"Exiter!"

Silence.

He entered the room carrying Exiter's body by the scruff of the cat's neck, Heron watching with stunned, disbelieving eyes. He'd known Jimmy Cruz—Monsignor James Cruz—since his seminary days; they'd served in Nam together, worked out of barrio parishes back in South L.A. They'd been friends—but never, Heron remembered, *close* friends; there had been something about Cruz that had made Heron keep his distance; a singleness of purpose, of *holy* purpose, that bordered on fanaticism. Well, the border had been crossed; and left far behind.

But even fanaticism didn't excuse what Heron had just seen.

Cruz threw Exiter's body towards Heron's chair, the cat skidding against Heron's leg in a crumpled heap, as if he had no more bones in his body. He looked much smaller in death, defenseless and, somehow, innocent. Heron breathed a prayer to ease his passing.

"Don't waste your breath on that Hellspawn," Cruz said roughly.

"I'd do the same for you."

"It got the death it deserved!"

Heron shivered. The demon Cruz had conjured had pulped the cat in seconds; Exiter hadn't had a chance, and his dying hadn't been pretty. "Nobody deserves to die like that," Heron said softly.

"Tell that to Arni Holder."

Arni Holder. *The man was fumbling a fresh clip into his rifle when the thing slammed into him, and he screamed as its fetid, charnel breath started his face running like melting wax, screamed impossibly louder as its great claws raked him open from chin to groin.*

Exiter had done that.

"Where's your come-back, Mickey?" Cruz asked viciously; whatever friendship the two men might once have shared was gone now. "Cat got your tongue?"

Heron looked at him and said nothing.

"Tell me something, Mickey. Why're you helping her?"

"She needed help."

"She's the *Devil's Daughter*, man! Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

"No."

"Then you're a fool, Heron. Or worse. *I'd kill her on sight, her and any of her kind!*" He made the word an obscenity, spitting it out with a venom Heron had heard few times in his life.

"Jimmy, you're a man of God . . ."

"*That's right!*" Cruz roared, his fury catching Heron by surprise; the man was going a mood a minute, flipping from one to the next without pattern or warning. "And I didn't run out on my responsibilities, either!"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You tell me, Mickey; you're the priest who quit. Walked out. Deserted your God and His Church when they needed you most . . ."

"I left because I had to."

"Oh? I say you left because you were a coward. Or a traitor."

"Traitor? Traitor to *what*? This isn't Nam, this is *America!* What's the matter with you?"

"We're fighting a war, boy; that's what the matter is. D'you understand that, a war! A vicious, brutal, no-



holds-barred, dog-eat-dog war. A war that the Church has been losing. Well, my men and I are out to change that track record, Michael; we're the spearhead of God's counter-attack. His Green Berets."

*Green Berets?* Heron didn't believe it; this wasn't real, it couldn't be. "What-what war?" he stammered, trying to pick some sense out of his mad hallucination.

"The war between God and Satan, of course; what other war is there?"

"Oh, no. Oh my God, no. You can't be serious."

"Deadly serious. I've killed in His service, Michael; with my bare hands. The time of Armageddon is nigh and those who serve Satan must be struck down 'ere

they can move against us. No Quislings must be left alive to threaten our cause . . ."

"Quislings?"

"You either stand with us, or against us. And if you choose to stand against us, you choose to pay the price."

"Jimmy, listen to me; please. You need help. You're not . . ."

"Rational?" Cruz smiled; he looked supremely rational now, charming. The All-American boy, with a handsomely innocent face that'd give Robert Redford competition. "A war'll do that to you, Mickey."

"No. I . . . I . . . the way you killed Exiter . . . Christ! Jimmy, you're dealing with the *N'garai*, the Elder Gods."

"I know. Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire. But you don't have to worry about getting burned by any backlash effect," Cruz' mouth curled with scorn; he thought Heron was afraid of the *N'garai*. "I took all the mandated precautions."

"For your person, yes; but what about your soul?"

"What about my soul? I'm not doing anything wrong. Maybe my methods are a bit ruthless at times but so's our enemy; and sometimes you have to destroy something in order to save it, sometimes the innocent get chopped along with the guilty. But if that sacrifice insures us the victory we desire, then so be it!"

"Oh, God, no. Jimmy, you've got it all wrong; you're destroying *yourself*, and everything you believe in. *Not Satan!*" Heron stained against the handcuffs that bound him in the chair, grimacing in pain as he felt the flesh of his wrists tear, the blood running warm and slick down his hands.

"Jimmy," he sobbed, trying desperately to reach Cruz, "you're wrong; terribly, terribly wrong! The . . . di-chot-o-my between God and Satan isn't a war; it never has been. It *can't* be. It's a choice, two paths; but it cannot-be-a-war! In a war you fight to win, to destroy—obliterate—your enemy; in a war, it's the ends justifying the means. But you can't have that here; you *darent*! Here, the *means* are everything. Because . . . because if you start using Satan's weapons against Satan, what makes you any better than he is? You've made your choice by saying his way is better than God's because his way works . . ."

"What'd you suggest, Mickey, that we lie back and let Satan's servants walk all over us?"

"If it's a choice between that and killing them, yes!"

"We fight 'em with *love*, is that it?"

"Yes!" Heron roared, his voice cracking with pain and despair. "Because if you don't—if life isn't, in the end, for *love*—then what the hell is the point! You're the priest, Jimmy; you tell me."

"You were a priest once."

"And I almost lost that need to *love*. People almost came not to matter . . ."

"You left."

"I found out that you can *love*—people, life, God,, you name it—and not be a priest; but you can't, really, be a priest if you can't . . . *love*. It's as simple as that."

"You're a fool, Michael; and fools won't survive this war."



"Nor will you, James Cruz," Satana said quietly from the door.

Cruz spun fast, his gun firing as soon as he saw her; but she'd begun moving when he had and his bullets missed her. He turned with her, his gun always ready in his hand.

"Mitch!" he called, his eyes never leaving Satana as she glided round the room. "Donovan! *Allesandro!*"

"Your calls are in vain, Cruz; your men will not come to your aid. You have no more men."

"*Witch!*" Cruz spat and he fired again, missed again.

"Satana, what . . ." Heron began, but Satana cut him off.

"I am what I am, Michael. My Father's daughter, a succubus. A killer."

"I'm a killer, too, Hellspawn!" Cruz cackled. "You would have died last night if this fool here hadn't interfered. But now, you'll both die. In the name of the Lord!"

"You *dare* call yourself priest?" Satana hissed, her eyes snapping from Heron to Exiter's crumpled body to Cruz. "You, who traffic with the *N'garai* and call them *friend*! You pitiful little man, take care, lest you destroy us all."

"Destroy you, yes! I will destroy you, for I am the Sword of Righteousness, the Avenger of the Lord; I am the Slayer of His Enemies. I am your Death!"

"You are *nothing*!"

Cruz moved towards Satana, firing as he went. She never once seemed to move but the bullets never came anywhere near her; she had fed well this night, her strength at its peak, one moment she was an eldritch wraith, the next a woman.

Finally, Cruz ran out of bullets.

Silence. Broken by the desperate, sobbing click of a pistol hammer falling on an empty chamber.

"It is time for you to die, James Cruz."

"*NO!*" Cruz screamed as he fumbled a silver crucifix out of his coat pocket and flashed it in Satana's

face, the ceiling's incandescent lights turning the flat surface of the cross to liquid flame. Instinctively Satana flinched away from the cross, but she was too close, there was no way she could avoid an agonizing burn. Then, after a second, she straightened up, a quizzical expression on her face.

"Bow before the power of the living God!" Cruz shrieked, his words punched through with high-pitched staccato laughter. "Bow!" He waved the cross closer, eager to see her flawless, aristocratic features burn and char.

Nothing happened.

Slowly, still nervous about what would happen if she actually touched the cross, Satana reached up and pushed it away from her face.

Nothing happened.

"Oh my God," Heron breathed.

In one move, Satana's left hand had locked around Cruz's right wrist, slowly applying pressure until Cruz cried out and the useless cross fell to the floor.

Then, she smiled. And Cruz realized what had just happened.

"God!" he screamed, "Help me!"

"You cry in vain, Cruz," Satana said softly, her gentle tone believed by the merciless steel in her eyes. "As you have deserted your God, so has he deserted you. The scales are balanced."

"Noooo! It can't end like this. I am the Chosen Warrior of the Lord! I am His Anointed . . ."

"See what you are, little man," Satana cried, locking his arm around to jam him up close to her. "Look into my eyes. Look, little man; Satana commands you now! Look, I say, and see just what you are!"

Cruz had no choice. Fearfully, his eyes peered up into hers; and in that instant he was lost. The basilisk in his soul reared up and struck him down.

His cry was pitiful.

Choked off an instant later by Satana's lips as she bound Cruz to her with her succubus lock. He tasted foul, as if he were already long dead.

"Satana!" Heron's cry was torn from his soul, and Satana didn't registered the chink of snapping metal as his cuffs snapped apart.

She let the husk that had once been James Cruz go and its parchment flesh shattered on the floor, like a mummy carelessly unwrapped after five thousand years in the tomb. Heron was on the floor, too, cradling his bloody wrists to his chest; he was sobbing. *For Cruz?* she thought; *Why waste the effort? Cry instead for Exiter.*

She knelt beside her familiar, her hand trembling as she reached out to smooth his fur. *Why doesn't he purr; he'd always purred at my touch.* She ached inside, deep inside, a hollowness she'd never felt before, even on the day her Father had told her her mother had finally died.

She'd never felt . . . grief . . . before.

There was a hand touching her, Heron's. "Satana," he said softly, wanting to help.

"Get away from me!" she snarled as she threw him across the room. She was on him before he could recover, lifting him onto the wall, locking her lips onto his before either of them realized what was happening.

mmmmmm

Madness in his eyes, Heron got his arms high and

slashed them down, breaking her grip on the first try; he fell, collapsing face down at her feet, barely strong enough now to push him back up so he could see higher than her feet.

She was looking down at him with wide, hating eyes. Only Zannarth had ever broken her succubus lock before, and then, only because she had let him.

"What have you done to me?" she whispered. "What spells have you cast to change me? I am the Devil's Daughter, Heron; I am Satana! And I will not be changed to fit any man's purpose. Do you hear me, Heron; I will not be changed! By you or anyone."

And then she was gone, Exiter's body cradled gently in her arms.

Slowly, painfully, Heron scraped his way across the floor to Cruz' body; there was one thing he had to do before he could yield to the fatigue Satana's kiss had sired within him.

He had no oil. And Cruz had no soul. Did that make the Last Rites futile? Heron hoped God would understand; because, in the end, Cruz really *had* done it all for love.

He traced the sign of the Cross on Cruz' withered forehead, wincing in sympathetic pain as the flesh powdered under his fingers.

"In nomine Patris," he began. "Et Filii, et Spiriti Sancti. Amen . . ."

And then, he paused, his eyes turning to the door Satana had left through. God, he was tired. So tired.

"You don't understand, do you, Satana?" he mused, his voice barely audible. "No spell, no curse. Just yourself, being yourself."

"You're half-human, Satana. Down in Hell it didn't matter much, you being a half-breed. Your father was too powerful an influence for any other ethos to survive. But here . . ."

"This is middle-ground . . . not Heaven, not Hell. Here, you're vulnerable. And the longer you stay here, the more you'll change. The more human you'll become. God help you."

"God help us all."



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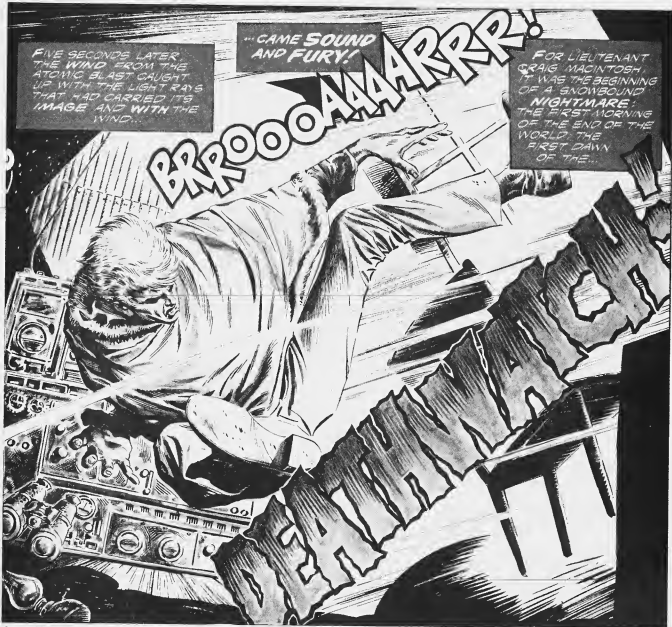
SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1971: AS USUAL, HE WAS AT HIS ALASKAN RADAR POST PROMPTLY AT SIX A.M. WATCHING FOR SOME SIGN OF ENEMY AIRCRAFT APPROACHING FROM THE NORTHWEST.

HE DIDN'T SEE ANY AIRCRAFT, ENEMY OR OTHERWISE--HE NEVER HAD-- BUT WHAT HE DID SEE WAS FAR, FAR MORE IMPORTANT--

--THOUGH IN THE INSTANT IT OCCURRED IT LOST ITS IMPORTANCE--

--AS DID EVERYTHING ELSE IN WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN CALLED CIVILIZATION.

OH SWEET LORD IN HEAVEN...!



FIVE SECONDS LATER THE WIND FROM THE ATOMIC BLAST CAUGHT UP WITH THE LIGHT RAYS THAT HAD CARRIED ITS IMAGE AND WITH THE WIND...

...CAME SOUND AND FURY!

BRROOOAAAARRR!

FOR LIEUTENANT CRAIG MACINTOSH, IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF A SNOWBOUND NIGHTMARE! THE FIRST MORNING OF THE END OF THE WORLD! THE FIRST DAWN OF THE...

BOOM!

BUT THAT HAPPENED FIVE YEARS AGO. AND FOR CRAIG MACINTOSH, IT'S SO MUCH ANCIENT HISTORY...



TODAY HE WAKES SLOWLY, WITH A SENSE THAT SOMETHING DIFFERENT IS IN THE AIR... SOMETHING... ODD...



AND THROUGH SOME SIXTH SENSE, SOME UNCANNY PREMONITION, CRAIG MACINTOSH CAN FEEL THAT A PROFOUND CHANGE WILL OCCUR TODAY...



TODAY... HE WILL BE VISITED BY MAN...



AT FIRST HE ALMOST DOESN'T HEAR IT. IT SEEMS MERELY AN ECHO OF HIS DREAMS...

...UNTIL IT BECOMES CLEARER... MORE REAL... AND DEFINITELY... A VOICE:



HELLO! HELLO-- IS ANYONE ALIVE IN THERE?

FIVE YEARS. ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE DAYS WITHOUT HUMAN COMPANIONSHIP.

IMAGINE IT IF YOU CAN, AND THEN IMAGINE THE SHUDDERING JOY WHICH RUNS THROUGH CRAIG'S BONES AS HE THROWS OPEN HIS DOOR.



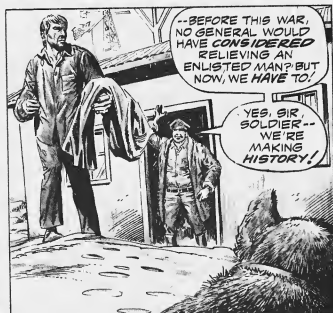
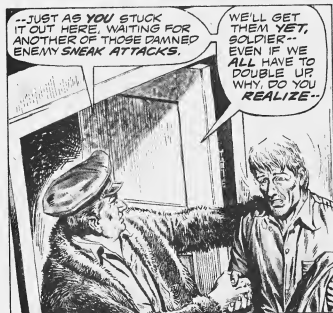
...AND RUNS TO MEET HIS SAVIOR!



SO--THERE IS SOMEONE ALIVE AROUND HERE AFTER ALL!

GOOD GOD, MAN--YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE JUST SEEN A GHOST!





FOR HOURS WHICH BECAME DAYS, HE RODE THROUGH THE WIND AND THE SNOW, HEADING SOUTH TO THE BASE HE'D LEFT FIVE YEARS BEFORE. AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS RATHER PROLONGED "TOUR OF DUTY."

WHAT DROVE HIM SOUTH HE COULDN'T BE SURE.

BUT WHATEVER IT WAS, IT BURNED WITHIN HIM LIKE RAGING FIRE, BUILDING AS HE DREW NEARER TO THE OLD LOCATION OF THE ARMY BASE.



SWELLING OUT OF CONTROL ON THE MORNING OF HIS FOURTH PAY OUT, WHEN...

THE BASE...!

I...MADE IT.

AND SO...

WHAT IN THE NAME OF PURGATORY IS THAT?

LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING I FOUND ON THE BOTTOM OF MY SHOE ONCE.

HEY, BOY-- ARE YOU ALIVE?



YOU--ARE YOU THE PILOT OF THIS PLANE? PLEASE, YOU'VE GOT TO TELL ME--

I'VE GOT TO GET HOME--FIND OUT ABOUT MY FAMILY!

SAY YOU ARE IN BAD SHAPE, AREN'T YOU? WHAT HAPPENED ANYWAY?

AND AFTER CRAIG HAS EXPLAINED

PORTLAND, WASHINGTON? SURE, I'LL FLY YOU THERE, PAL-- ANYTHING FOR OUR BOYS IN THE SERVICE, RIGHT?

BUT I'LL ONLY FLY YOU THERE--THAT'S AS FAR AS I'LL GO. UNDERSTAND?





ANYTHING YOU SAY,  
WHEN CAN WE **LEAVE?**



NO TIME LIKE THE  
**PRESENT**, MY  
MAN.

HOP ABOARD--  
AND WE **GO**.

HOURS PASS IN SILENCE, A GRIM SILENCE WHICH  
**DEEPENS** WHEN THE PLANE FINALLY APPROACHES  
THE FORMER BEAUTY OF NORTHERN WASHINGTON,  
AND FINDS INSTEAD...



**ASHES!**

EVERYTHING'S  
**BURNED**--THERE'S  
NOTHING BUT  
CINDERS DOWN  
THERE, CHARCOALED  
TREES--GROUND  
BURNT GRAY--



WHAT HAPPENED  
TO IT ALL? THERE  
WERE TREES THERE--  
GRASS, FLOWERS  
PLANTS--

WHAT  
HAPPENED?

DIDN'T YOU  
HEAR,  
FRIEND?



WE HAD  
A WAR.

CHOKING BACK A STINGING REPLY, CRAIG SITS IN  
TORMENTED IMMOBILITY, HIS FACE **HARDENING**  
AS HE WATCHES THE RAVAGED LAND FLASHING BY  
**BENEATH** HIM...



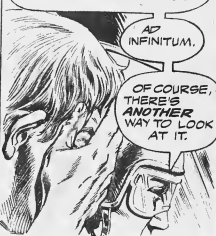
...WATCHING AS A  
CITY LOOMS INTO  
VIEW, AS RUINED AS  
THE LAND WHICH  
**SURROUNDS** IT...

SO RUINED, THAT  
AT FIRST CRAIG  
DOESN'T  
**RECOGNIZE** IT...

...AND WHEN HE DOES HE  
CAN ONLY SCREAM.



IT WAS THE **ENEMY**, YOU  
KNOW. HE'S THE ONE WHO  
SENT THE BOMBS, WHICH  
CAUSED US TO SEND BOMBS  
BACK TO HIM, AND HIM TO  
SEND BOMBS BACK TO US--



AD  
INFINITUM.

OF COURSE,  
THERE'S  
**ANOTHER**  
WAY TO LOOK  
AT IT.

AND THAT ALL DEPENDS ON  
HOW YOU INTERPRET THE  
WORD **ENEMY**.



TELL ME.



AND AS CRAIG LISTENS, THE PLOT EXPLAINS...



THIS ONE WEEK LATER, IN THE RADAR  
HUT WHICH CRAIG MACINTOSH INHABITED  
FOR FIVE LONELY YEARS...



**SLAM!**

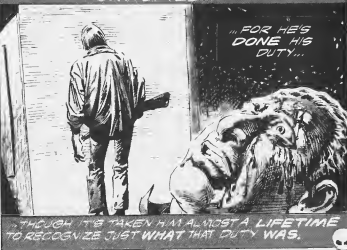
GOOD LORD!  
MAN! YOU GAVE  
ME A START!



FOR SEVERAL SECONDS THE SHOT ECHOES IN THE SMALL SHACK, MINGLING WITH THE GENERAL'S SCREAM--AND THE SOREAWNS OF THE ENEMY'S VICTIMS IN CRAIG MACINTOSH'S MIND.



AND WHEN THE ECHOES DIE IT'S AS THOUGH THE GHOSTS OF THOSE VICTIMS DIES ALSO...AND CRAIG MACINTOSH'S SATISFIED...





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SATURDAY 24TH AUGUST: A BLEAK COVER OF FILTHY CLOUD HOVERS OVER MANHATTAN. NOWHERE IS THE DISMAL LATE-MORNING GLOOM MORE PERVASIVE THAN ON THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR OF A WORLD-FAMOUS BUILDING...



DESADIA--HAVE YOU CHARTERED THE PLANE?



YES, GABRIEL.

BUT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF OPENCOMMERCIAL FLIGHTS TO LONDON...



AND ALL OF THEM FILLED WITH INNOCENT PASSENGERS, DESADIA.

I SEE.

THEN I WAS CORRECT IN NOT WAITING FOR YOU TO ASK ME, GABRIEL... I'VE ALREADY MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO ACCOMPANY YOU.



GABRIEL DEVIL-HUNTER

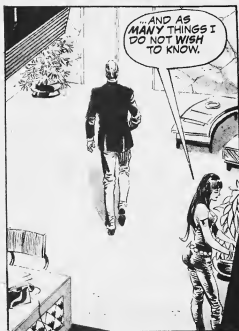
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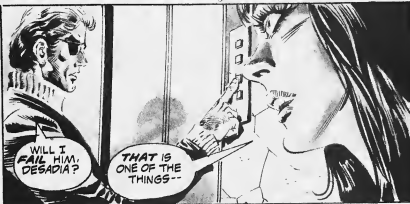
THEN  
ONCE AGAIN  
YOU--

--KNEW.

YES, GABRIEL.  
I KNEW. THERE ARE  
MANY THINGS  
I KNOW...



...AND AS  
MANY THINGS I  
DO NOT WISH  
TO KNOW.



WILL I  
FAIL HIM,  
DESADIA?

THAT IS  
ONE OF THE  
THINGS--



I DO NOT  
WISH TO  
KNOW.



BUT I  
DO KNOW  
THIS--

I WILL  
FAIL YOU,  
GABRIEL...



...AND  
YET...



...YOU  
WILL NEED  
ME.

1:42 PM: A CHARTERED JET BOUND FOR LONDON LURCHES FROM A RAIN-SPATTERED RUNWAY AT LA GUARDIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT...



WE WILL REACH LONDON IN APPROXIMATELY FIVE HOURS, GABRIEL... MAKING IT CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT WITH THE TIME DIFFERENCE.

AND A CAR WILL BE WAITING...?

YES.

THEN WE MAY HAVE A CHANCE OF REACHING HIS ESTATE IN TIME AND NOW, DESADIA I MUST RELAX... TO PREPARE MYSELF--



AHG-K!!

GABRIEL! ARE YOU--



GET AWAY FROM ME, DESADIA!

GET AS FAR AWAY FROM ME AS POSSIBLE!



TAKE MY HAND, GABRIEL.

TOGETHER WE CAN--



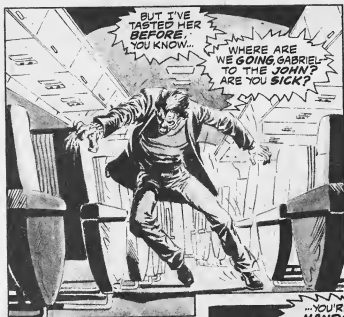
SO YOU SAVE HER, YOU SIMPERING SISSY.



GET AWAY FROM ME!!!

BEFORE I RIP YOU TO SHREDS--!!





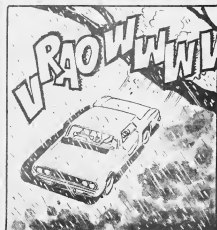
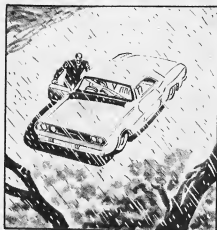














STONEHENGE: A DREARY WIND HOWLS THROUGH A BIZZARE FORMATION OF HUGE OBELISKS ERECTED IN AGE PAST TO THE WORSHIP OF PAGAN DEITIES. THE SILENT SPIRITS OF DRUID PRIESTS LURK BEHIND EACH OF THE TOWERING PILLARS.

AND RAIN SPITTERS ANCIENT STONE AND MODERN COWL ALIKE.

WE ARE THY CHILDREN, BELOVED SATAN... COME TO WORSHIP THY GLORY.

WE BESEECH THEE TO HEAR OUR PRAYERS ON THIS HOLY SABBATH IN THE SEVENTH YEAR OF SATAN. WE BESEECH THEE TO...



A BLACK MASS, GABRIEL. THEN CHESTERTON IS A SATANIST...

HE IS DAMNED, DESADIA--



--AND THE MOST WE CAN HOPE TO DO IS PREVENT THE SPREADING OF HIS DAMNATION.



--TO ACCEPT OUR ADORATION AND REWARD US IN WORLDLY RICHES. WE BESEECH THEE TO GRANT US THE FULL MEASURE OF THY--

--COWARDICE.



THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE, DEMON-FILTH-- NOTHING BUT A COWARD.

YOU'VE ALREADY POSSESSED THE MORTAL. WHY DO YOU HIDE WITHIN HIM? ALLOW HIM TO SPEAK WITH HIS OWN TONGUE!





WHY DO YOU NOT--



-- MANIFEST YOUR POSSESSION?!



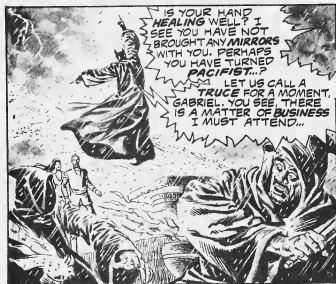
A GOOD QUESTION, GABRIEL...

...BUT YOUR FACE DOES NOT TASTE NEARLY AS HANDSOME AS IT DID ABOARD THE AIRPLANE.



NOR DOES YOUR CHEAP PARLOR TRICK--LEVITATION--IMPRESS ME ANY MORE THAN IT EVER HAS.

YOU CANNOT GOAD ME, GABRIEL. YOU HAVE MOCKED ME TOO OFTEN IN THE PAST FOR YOUR TONGUE TO CARRY ANYTHING BESIDES YOURS AS SO MUCH SMALLER THAN MINE.



IS YOUR HAND HEALING WELL? I SEE YOU HAVE NOT BROUGHT ANY MIRRORS WITH YOU. PERHAPS YOU HAVE TURNED PACIFIST...?

LET US CALL A TRUCE FOR A MOMENT, GABRIEL. YOU SEE THERE IS A MATTER OF BUSINESS I MUST ATTEND...



THIS BODY I HAVE POSSESSED--THIS CHESTER TON--HAS DARED TO WORSHIP ME. CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT, GABRIEL?

THIS FOOL HAS HAD THE AUDACITY TO WORSHIP SATAN--AND TO THINK IT WOULD PLEASE ME--I--WHO CAN TOLERATE NOTHING BUT HATRED--SHOULD BE PLEASED BY HIS ADORATION.





HER GOD IS  
LOVE, DEMON-SCUM!  
HER GOD IS SELFLESS!!  
HER GOD CAN MAKE YOU  
WHIMPER ON YOUR  
HORNED KNEES--

--OR HAVE  
YOU FORGOTTEN  
HOW HER GOD  
LOWERED YOU?



KISS ME,  
DESADIA--!

WHAT?!



KISS ME!



THAT WAS LOVE,  
DEMON! THOSE SATANISTS  
DIDN'T LOVE YOU--CHESTER-  
TON DOES NOT LOVE YOU!  
THEY COZEN YOU...AND THEY  
LICK YOUR FEET TO BE  
REWARDED.

BUT WHAT  
YOU HAVE JUST  
SEEN IS LOVE-- LOVE  
WHICH EXISTS FOR  
ITSELF NOT FOR THE  
PROMISE OF WORLDLY  
RICHES.



AND YOU CAN'T  
STAND IT, CAN YOU?  
YOU CAN'T STAND  
OUR LOVE--!

YOU CAN'T  
STAND THE FACT  
THAT WE LOVE  
YOU!!

YOU'RE A  
LIAR,  
GABRIEL!





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